

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 108696
ORIGIN NASA-02

INFO OCT-01 OES-07 ISO-00 PM-05 IO-14 SP-02 L-03
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NASA/LF-6/RANEWMAN (DRAFT)
NASA/LIC-17/WGBASTEDO (DRAFT)
NASA/LIC-17/SEDOYLE (DRAFT)
PM/ISO:MMICHAUD
IO/UNP:DMACUK
S/P:WGATHRIGHT
L/UNA:DSTEWART
OES/APT/SA:JBLACKBURN

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: TSPA

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON PRESENT STATUS
NASA SKYLAB

1. IN LIGHT RECENT INTEREST IN SOVIET COSMOS 954 CANADIAN
RE-ENTRY AND SUBSEQUENT SPECULATION IN U.S. PRESS ON NASA
SKYLAB RE-ENTRY, FOLLOWING IS UPDATED TEXT OF RECENTLY
ISSUED NASA FACT SHEET WHICH SHOULD BE USED FOR RESPONSE
TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING SKYLAB. POSTS SHOULD NOT INITIATE
DISCUSSION THIS SUBJECT AND ANY QUESTIONS WHICH GO BEYOND
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PAGE 02 STATE 108696

INFORMATION SUPPLIED SHOULD BE REFERRED TO NASA HEAD-
QUARTERS, WASHINGTON, DC.

2. UPDATED TEXT OF NASA FACT SHEET RELEASE:

QUOTE: THE LATEST DATE ON THE ORBIT OF THE SKYLAB WORK-
SHOP INDICATES THAT IT WILL HAVE DESCENDED TO 150 NAUTICAL

MILES (173 STATUTE MILES, 278 KILOMETERS) ALTITUDE AND COULD BEGIN RE-ENTRY INTO THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE AS EARLY AS THE SPRING OF 1979 OR AS LATE AS FEB-MARCH OF 1980.

NASA BASES ITS PREDICTION ON DATA PROVIDED BY THE NORTH AMERICAN AIR DEFENSE COMMAND'S (NORAD) SATELLITE OBSERVATORY, AND THE SWISS FEDERAL OBSERVATORY.

NASA IS WORKING ON PLANS THAT MAY EXTEND THE SKYLAB RE-ENTRY TIME, SUCH AS REACTIVATION OF THE SKYLAB WORKSHOP'S ATTITUDE CONTROL SYSTEMS TO ORIENT SKYLAB IN A MANNER TO REDUCE DRAG AND PERHAPS ADD SEVERAL MONTHS TO THE ORBITAL LIFETIME. NASA WILL ATTEMPT THIS IN SPRING OF 1978.

IN ADDITION, THE LAUNCH OF A TELEOPERATOR RETRIEVAL SYSTEM (TRS) ON AN EARLY SPACE SHUTTLE MISSION, ABOUT OCTOBER 1979 IS BEING EXAMINED. THE TRS WOULD BE CARRIED INTO ORBIT BY THE SHUTTLE, REMOVED FROM THE SHUTTLE PAYLOAD BAY AND FLOWN BY REMOTE CONTROL TO DOCK WITH SKYLAB. ONCE DOCKED, A PROPULSION SYSTEM ON TRS COULD BE OPERATED EITHER TO RAISE THE SKYLAB ORBIT OR TO CAUSE IT TO RE-ENTER THE ATMOSPHERE IN A CONTROLLED FASHION TO A REMOTE OCEAN AREA OF THE EART; BELOW.

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 STATE 108696

SKYLAB IS THE LARGEST PAYLOAD IN EARTH ORBIT. IT WEIGHS 85 TONS AND IS ABOUT 96 FEET LONG. THE MAIN PORTION IS CYLINDRICAL, 22 FEET IN DIAMETER.

SKYLAB,ON DESCENDING INTO THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE, IS EXPECTED TO BREAK UP AND BURN DURING DESCENT. SOME DEBRIS IS EXPECTED TO SURVIVE THE RE-ENTRY AND REACH THE EARTH'S SURFACE. IT IS PROBABLE THE ANY SURVIVING DEBRIS WOULD LAND IN AN OCEAN SINCE 75 PER CENT OF THE EARTH BENEATH THE SKYLAB ORBIT IS WATER. IN ORBIT, SKYLAB IS PASSING ABOVE THE AREA OF EARTH BETWEEN 50 DEGREES NORTH AND 50 DEGREES SOUTH LATITUDE.

SKYLAB WAS LAUNCHED IN MAY 1973 AND WAS MANNED DURING THREE MISSIONS BY THREE DIFFERENT ASTRONAUT CREWS. THE LAST CREW DEPARTED SKYLAB FEB. 8, 1974 AT AN ALTITUDE OF 237 NAUTICAL MILES (273 SM, 440 KM). SKYLA0 PRESENTLY IS 209 BY 217 NAUTICAL MILES (388 BY 401 KM) ABOVE EARTH.

AT THE TIME THE FINAL CREW DEPARTED, NASA ESTIMATED THAT THE ORBITING WORKSHOP WOULD REMAIN IN SPACE UNTIL

1983. HOWEVER, SINCE THAT TIME, THE ORBIT HAS DECREASED AT A HIGHER-THAN-ANTICIPATED RATE AND NASA HAS BEEN ADJUSTING ITS PREDICTIONS FROM TIME TO TIME. CONTRIBUTING TO THE MORE RAPID RATE-OF-DESCENT IS AN INCREASE IN ATMOSPHERIC DRAG WHICH IS RELATED TO SUNSPOT ACTIVITY. END QUOTE.

3. SKYLAB HAS NO REPEAT NO NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES ON BOARD. VANCE

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Message Attributes

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